

Serial No.: 09/879,220  
Attorney Docket No.: BL055-GN003-CIP  
Amendment

### REMARKS

Claims 1-58 and 60-90 are currently pending in the Application. Claim 56 has been amended. Claim 59 has been canceled. All other claims remain in their original form. Reconsideration of the Application is respectfully requested.

#### **I. Objections**

The Office action states that claims 5-8, 10-12, 56-59, 61-63, and 70 contain allowable subject matter but are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The rejections of the base claims are respectfully traversed, as set forth below. Because the base claims are in condition for allowance, Applicant respectfully requests that these objections be withdrawn.

#### **II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112**

Claims 56-59 stand rejected under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 for an alleged failure to provide proper antecedent basis. The Office action contends that the recitation "the influence score F" in claim 56 lacks proper antecedent basis. Accordingly, claim 56 has been amended to delete the "F" in this recitation. The term "the influence score" has proper antecedent basis in claim 39, from which claim 56 depends. Accordingly, claim 56 is now in condition for allowance.

Claims 57 contains the recitation "the decay function  $d$ " in similar syntax to "the influence score" in claim 56. The term "the decay function  $d$ " has proper antecedent basis in claim 56, from which claim 57 depends. Accordingly, claim 57 is in condition for allowance.

Claim 58 contains the recitation "the impact  $I$ " in similar syntax to "the influence score" in claim 56. The term "the impact  $I$ " has proper antecedent basis in claim 56, from which claim 58 depends. Accordingly, claim 58 is in condition for allowance.

Claim 59 has been canceled.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully requests that these rejections be withdrawn.

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### III. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1-4, 9, 13-15, 26-31, 33, 35-38, 52-55, 60, 64-69, and 71-75 stand rejected as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,571,234 to Knight et al. For the reasons set forth below, these rejections are respectfully traversed.

#### A. Claims 1-4, 9, and 13-15

Independent claim 1 is directed to a system for processing message traffic from a plurality of electronic discussion forums, comprising: a message collector for collecting messages from the plurality of electronic discussion forums; and means for processing the messages based on a series of topics in order to track a plurality of pseudonyms, wherein the processing includes computing a relevance score for a collected message based on at least one topic.

In the rejection, the Office action explains that it broadly construes the claim term “relevance score” as “a method to disseminate [sic] [discriminate - ?] messages from the other messages based on a criterion.” (Office action, ¶ 8). This construction, however, completely disregards the plain-language meaning of the words themselves. The simple act of discriminating one message from another based on a criterion is quite different than *computing a score* for each message, as the method of claim 1 does. Indeed, the Office action’s construction of “relevance score” to mean discriminating between messages based on a criterion does not describe anything to be *computed* at all. It simply describes a determination to be made – discriminating between messages.

Claim 1 requires the step of “computing a relevance score” for a message. This step is not taught by Knight. Instead, each message is processed and assigned a tag specifying the subject classification to which that message will be assigned. (See generally col.12 of Knight). Accordingly, the step of “computing a relevance score for a collected message” is absent from Knight method, and Knight therefore does not anticipate claim 1.

Claims 2-4, 9, and 13-15 all depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above with respect to claim 1.

Further regarding claims 3 and 4, the Office action misunderstands the method by which the “buzz score” is computed. In claim 3, the “buzz score” for a set of messages is

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computed from “the relevance of the set of messages and the influence of posting pseudonyms that posted the set of messages.” Claim 4 provides a formula for computing

this buzz score:  $B = \sum_{i=1}^n (Rel_i \cdot F_i)$ , where *Rel* is a computed relevance score for a

message, *F* is a computed influence score for a poster of a message, and *n* is the number of messages in the set. This algorithm places emphasis on messages that are highly on-point to the selected topic and messages written by influential authors. A high ranking on either factor will increase that message’s contribution to the total buzz. The Knight method, by contrast, does not use either of these weighted factors to compute the buzz score; it simply counts the actual number of times each message has been viewed. Knight uses a “hit” counter to identify hot topics or discussion threads (col.24, ln.37-67), and this measure is does not produce a computed “buzz score” using the algorithm in claims 3 and 4 of the present application. The Office action’s citation to Knight’s “Show Author’s Messages” function (col.16, ln.48-55) is inapposite because that function simply filters out messages written by a specific author. It does not compute a buzz score for a set of messages using relevance scores for the messages and influence scores for the message authors, as provided in claims 3 and 4.

Further regarding claims 13-15, all of these claims require the step of computing an “opinion rating” for a message. In the method of claim 15, textual analysis software application compares a content of the collected message with a plurality of known words and phrases indicative of expressions of an opinion. There is no reference at all in Knight to analysis of *opinions* expressed in messages. The Knight method classifies messages into groups based on subject matter (col.22, ln.7-43), but it does not classify or in any way analyze *opinions* expressed in messages.

**B. Claims 26-31**

Independent claim 26 is directed to a system for processing messages from a plurality of electronic discussion forums, comprising: a message collector for collecting messages from the plurality of electronic discussion forums; and means for processing the messages based on a series of topics in order to track a plurality of pseudonyms, wherein the processing includes computing a relevance score for a collected message

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based on at least one topic, and wherein the processing includes computing a buzz score for a set of collected messages.

This claim includes the limitation that “the processing includes computing a relevance score for a collected message based on at least one topic.” As discussed above with respect to claim 1, the step of *computing* a relevance score is not taught by Knight. Thus, for the same reasons stated above, claim 26 is not anticipated by Knight.

Claims 27-31 depend from claim 26 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above.

**C. Claims 33 and 35-38**

Independent claim 33 is directed to a system for tracking message activity levels in a plurality of electronic discussion forums, comprising: a database storing a series of topics, wherein each of the electronic discussion forums is associated with at least one topic from the series of topics; a message collector for collecting messages from the plurality of electronic discussion forums; and a message categorizer for computing relevance scores of the messages, wherein at least one relevance score is computed based on the at least one associated topic for a source forum of a collected message.

This claim includes the limitation that “at least one relevance score is computed based on the at least one associated topic for a source forum of a collected message.” As discussed above with respect to claim 1, the step of *computing* a relevance score is not taught by Knight. Thus, for the same reasons stated above, claim 33 is not anticipated by Knight.

Claims 35-38 depend from claim 33 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above.

**D. Claims 52-55 and 60**

Independent claim 52 is directed to a method for processing message traffic from a plurality of electronic discussion forums, comprising the steps of: collecting messages from the plurality of electronic discussion forums; and processing the messages based on a series of topics in order to track a plurality of pseudonyms, wherein the processing step comprises computing a relevance score for a collected message based on at least one topic.

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This claim includes the step of “computing a relevance score for a collected message based on at least one topic.” As discussed above with respect to claim 1, the step of *computing* a relevance score is not taught by Knight. Thus, for the same reasons stated above, claim 52 is not anticipated by Knight.

Claims 53-55 and 60 depend from claim 52 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above.

Further regarding claims 54 and 55, the Office action misunderstands the method by which the “buzz score” is computed. These claims include the same limitations as claims 3 and 4, discussed above. For the same reasons stated above with respect to claims 3 and 4, claims 54 and 55 are not anticipated by Knight.

**E. Claims 64-69 and 71**

Independent claim 64 is directed to a method for processing messages from a plurality of electronic discussion forums, comprising the steps of: collecting messages from the plurality of electronic discussion forums; and processing the messages based on a series of topics in order to track a plurality of pseudonyms, wherein the processing step comprises computing a relevance score for a collected message based on at least one topic, and wherein the processing step comprises computing a buzz score for a set of collected messages.

This claim includes the step of “computing a relevance score for a collected message based on at least one topic.” As discussed above with respect to claim 1, the step of *computing* a relevance score is not taught by Knight. Thus, for the same reasons stated above, claim 64 is not anticipated by Knight.

Claims 65-69 and 71 depend from claim 64 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above.

Further regarding claim 71, the step of “computing an opinion rating for a message in the set of messages” is not taught by Knight, as discussed above with respect to claims 13-15.

**F. Claims 72-75**

Independent claim 72 is directed to a method for tracking message activity levels in a plurality of electronic discussion forums, comprising: storing a series of topics in a

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database, wherein each of the electronic discussion forums is associated with at least one topic from the series of topics; collecting messages from the plurality of electronic discussion forums; and computing relevance scores of the messages, wherein at least one relevance score is computed based on the at least one associated topic for a source forum of a collected message.

This claim includes the step of “computing relevance scores of the messages.” As discussed above with respect to claim 1, the step of *computing* a relevance score is not taught by Knight. Thus, for the same reasons stated above, claim 72 is not anticipated by Knight.

Claims 73-75 depend from claim 72 and are therefore allowable for the same reasons stated above.

#### IV. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claim 34 stands rejected as allegedly being obvious from Knight; and claims 16-25, 39-51, and 76-90 stand rejected as allegedly being obvious from Knight in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,314,420 to Lang et al. For the reasons set forth below, these rejections are respectfully traversed.

##### A. Claim 34

Claim 34 depends from independent claim 33 and therefore includes all the elements and limitations of claim 33. As discussed above, this claim includes the limitation that “at least one relevance score is computed based on the at least one associated topic for a source forum of a collected message.” As discussed above with respect to claim 1, the step of *computing* a relevance score is not taught by Knight. This feature of claim 34 is completely absent from the Knight reference. Accordingly, claim 34 is not obvious from Knight.

##### B. Claims 16-25

These claims all depend from independent claim 1 and therefore include all the elements and limitations of claim 1. As discussed above, claim 1 (and therefore each of claims 16-25) requires the step of “computing a relevance score” for a message. This step is not taught by Knight. Additionally, each of claims 16-25 includes the step of

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*computing an opinion rating* (from claim 13, from which claims 13-25 depend). As discussed above, there is no reference at all in Knight to analysis of *opinions* expressed in messages.

The Office action cites Lang for the teaching of ratings as applied to electronic messages, which is absent from the Knight reference. This reliance, however, is misplaced because the ratings of search results in Lang are supplied *manually by users*.

The Lang reference is a Lycos patent relating to a search technique known as adaptive search. A search engine employing this technique will use user-supplied feedback (whereby the users rate the quality of search results) to learn and adapt in order to select better search results in future searches. Thus, the Lang adaptive search method uses *manual ratings of messages by users* to improve the quality of subsequent searches. The rating of message quality is done entirely by users, and the search engine then uses these user-supplied quality ratings to adapt its search technique. By contrast, in the method of claims 16-25 of the present application, the ratings of messages are *computed* by the system upon analysis of each electronic message. Thus, the method of these claims is not simply using user feedback to improve future performance; it is *computing* message ratings for an analysis of discussion community activity. Lang does not teach the step of *computing an opinion rating* for an electronic message. Accordingly, claims 16-25 are not obvious from Knight in view of Lang.

**C. Claims 39-51**

These claims all depend from independent claim 33 and therefore include all the elements and limitations of claim 33. As discussed above, claim 33 (and therefore each of claims 39-51) includes the limitation that "at least one relevance score is computed based on the at least one associated topic for a source forum of a collected message." Because this step of *computing a relevance score* is not taught by either Knight or Lang, claims 39-51 are not obvious from Knight in view of Lang.

Further regarding claim 50, the Office action acknowledges that neither Knight nor Lang teaches comparison of a computed buzz score to a predetermined threshold in order to identify unusual discussion patterns. The Office action contends that this step would nonetheless be obvious because it is well-known in the art to monitor electronic

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discussion forums to detect various situations, including illegal activity, swearing, and misuse of the system. (Office action, ¶ 32). Such monitoring, even if well-known in the art, does not teach the comparison of a computed buzz score with a predetermined threshold in order to identify unusual discussion patterns. The buzz score according to the present application, and the use of it as a comparative measure to detect unusual discussion patterns, is not taught or suggested by any of the cited references. The Office action has cited no reference that teaches this feature of claim 50.

**D. Claims 76-90**

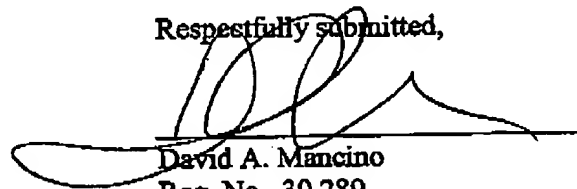
These claims all depend from independent claim 72 and therefore include all the elements and limitations of claim 72. As discussed above, claim 72 (and therefore each of claims 76-90) includes the step of "computing relevance scores of the messages." Because the step of *computing* a relevance score is not taught by Knight or Lang, claims 76-90 are not obvious from Knight in view of Lang.

**V. Conclusion**

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-58 and 60-90, now pending as amended, are distinguishable from the references cited, and in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejections of record is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner wishes to discuss any aspect of this response, please contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,



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